

Document A: Elmo “Bud” Zumwalt, Jr.

Background: Elmo Zumwalt, Jr., was born in November 1920. In those days it was unusual to have a working mother, but both of Zumwalt’s parents were doctors. Zumwalt was a member of the Boy Scouts and earned his Eagle Scout. An incredibly intelligent teen, he was the valedictorian of his class. Zumwalt planned to become a doctor like his parents, but ultimately decided to attend the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Naval Service: In 1939, as World War II began in Europe, Zumwalt entered the Naval Academy. Over the next few years he continued to perform well academically and was selected to serve as a Company Commander. After the U.S. entered World War II, Zumwalt served in the Pacific Theater, where he received a Bronze Star. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Zumwalt served as the Executive Officer (XO) and Navigator aboard a variety of ships, including the Battleship *Wisconsin*. As commander of several ships throughout the 1950s, Zumwalt continued to prove his value to Navy leaders and receive awards and commendations.

In the fall of 1968, Zumwalt became Commander Naval Forces-Vietnam and oversaw coastal operations related to the Vietnam War. Around this same time he was promoted to Vice Admiral. In April 1970 President Richard Nixon nominated Zumwalt to serve as Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). The CNO is the highest-ranking officer assigned to work in the Department of Defense. To the dismay of many, Zumwalt had been “deep selected,” meaning he was chosen over a significant number of more senior officers. Compared to previous Navy leadership, Zumwalt was very progressive in his policies. In this position he had tremendous control over policy issues. Zumwalt was able to issue far-reaching, law-altering policies through written directives called NAVOPS. Such proclamations were nicknamed “Z-grams” during Zumwalt’s tenure as CNO. Zumwalt used Z-grams to make the Navy more inclusive and was not opposed to ruffling feathers to make necessary changes that benefited minorities and women in the Navy. In 1974 Zumwalt retired from the Navy and in 1976 he challenged Virginia Senator Harry Byrd for his seat in the Senate. Zumwalt lost to the conservative senator, who in many ways stood for the exact opposite values that Zumwalt pushed as CNO. When Zumwalt passed away in 2000, President Bill Clinton gave a eulogy at his memorial service. In his remarks, Clinton referred to Zumwalt as “the conscience of the United States Navy” for his efforts to reduce discrimination and sexism during his tenure as CNO.

Photo # NH 97204 Adm. Zumwalt meets with sailors at Yokosuka, Japan, 1971

